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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 04 MANILA 002200

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EAP/PMBS, G/TIP, EAP/RSP, INL, DRL  
IIP/G/EAP - PRIETO  
DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS USAID FOR ANE/TS - SAULS  
LABOR FOR ILAB

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PHUM PREL PGOV KWMN ELAB RP

SUBJECT: NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS ACTIVE IN COMBATING  
TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

REF: A. MANILA 971

B. MANILA 670

1. (U) Summary: The Philippines has many top quality NGOs focused on trafficking in persons (TIP) and they enjoy a close working relationship with the Philippine government. Key NGOs making contributions in prosecution (a unique feature of Philippine law permits NGOs to press forward cases as prosecutors), protection, and prevention are discussed in Paras 6-8 below. Philippine NGOs have a very high absorptive capacity and USG grants multiply the impact of their anti-TIP efforts. End Summary.

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Anti-TIP NGOs  
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2. (U) The Philippines has many top quality NGOs focused on TIP. There are over a dozen working on TIP nationwide, as well as scores of smaller, local NGOs tackling the problem in their communities. Some of these NGOs such as the International Justice Mission (IJM), which is involved in investigation and prosecution, are local outlets of international NGOs. Others, such as the Visayan Forum Foundation (VFF), which is engaged in protection, are homegrown. Anti-TIP NGOs coordinate with each other through the Multi-Sectoral Network Against Trafficking (MSNAT).

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Close Working Ties with the GRP  
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3. (U) NGOs enjoy a close working relationship with the GRP. On a rotating basis, three NGOs are represented on the Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking (IACAT), which was formed pursuant to the 2003 Anti-Trafficking law. NGOs are also assisting IACAT to develop a national database to track trafficking statistics. Senior government officials, such as Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Undersecretary Lourdes G. Balanon, have publicly reiterated that the GRP highly values the synergy it has achieved with NGOs in combating TIP. Several GRP agencies have formal relationships with NGOs. As a sign of its commitment to cooperate with NGOs, for example, DSWD provides free office space to the Child Justice League (CJL), which focuses on investigation and prosecution (see below). In addition, the Department of Health closely coordinates with local NGOs to provide crisis intervention, and child protection and counseling to TIP victims undergoing treatment in government hospitals.

4. (U) Another example of close GRP-NGO cooperation involves the unique feature of Philippine law that permits NGOs to press forward cases as prosecutors. According to a 2002 circular published by the Supreme Court, private attorneys may be authorized to work as prosecutors if there is a "heavy work schedule (impacting) public prosecutors or in the event of a lack of public prosecutors." This feature allows motivated private-practice attorneys, who are usually compensated at higher rates and often better trained than public prosecutors, to take up TIP cases. The results of this innovation are still flowing in, but, so far, IJM and other NGOs involved in private prosecutions appear to be highly effective.

5. (U) Anti-TIP NGOs also work hand-in-hand with local governments. A leading example of close cooperation is in Davao City, Mindanao, where NGOs meet regularly with local officials. With the help of local NGOs, Davao City recently passed the country's first municipal anti-TIP ordinance. NGOs have also been advising Davao Mayor Rodrigo Duterte in his efforts to fight TIP by supplementing prosecutors' and judges' salaries, monitoring traffickers through the city's Task Force on Public Safety, and providing supplies, equipment and vehicles to anti-TIP groups. The city also has excellent relations with the VFF, which operates a shelter at the Port of Davao (many victims of trafficking come from Mindanao, an impoverished region). In another example of local governments working with NGOs, Quezon City Mayor

Feliciano Belmonte, at the urging of local NGOs, recently signed an ordinance meant to curb violence against women and children. The measure also created a municipal Anti-Prostitution Task Force composed of NGOs, the city's Department of Social Services and Development, and the Philippine National Police (PNP).

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Investigation and Prosecution  
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16. (U) Key NGOs involved in TIP investigation and prosecution include:

-- IJM (Philippines): IJM employs lawyers, investigators, and social workers, and is focused on rescuing TIP victims and helping strengthen the GRP's prosecution efforts. IJM investigates allegations of TIP, brings cases to court as a private prosecutor, and facilitates interagency communication. IJM has conducted training for hundreds of law enforcement officials throughout the archipelago. Since 2001, IJM has coordinated with the GRP in an effort to increase the number of pro bono prosecutions under a variety of TIP-related statutes, including the Anti-Trafficking law. IJM gathers evidence against traffickers and shares this information with the National Bureau of Investigation and the PNP. The police then use this information to obtain arrest warrants for traffickers, and IJM sometimes even accompanies the police on raids. In late 2004, The USG funded a grant to IJM to accelerate TIP prosecutions. IJM believes that its work will result in convictions under the 2003 Anti-Trafficking law, but has realistic expectations given the notoriously slow Philippine justice system.

-- Child Justice League (CJL): CJL is a non-profit association of lawyers and paralegals working to litigate, educate, and advocate against TIP. CJL provides free legal aid for trafficked children, and conducts community seminars to inform officials and the public about the Anti-Trafficking law. Tapping the conscience of the legal profession, CJL nurtures relationships with law schools, law firms and individual practitioners, urging participation in the anti-TIP effort. CJL is currently handling 10 TIP cases and has already provided legal services in over 1,000 cases. CJL lawyers have conducted over 100 legal training seminars for social workers, teachers, local government officials, prosecutors, law enforcement officers, health workers and court personnel. DSWD and corporate donors provide most of CJL's funding.

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Protection and Assistance to Victims  
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17. (U) Key NGOs involved in providing protection and assistance to victims include:

-- VFF: VFF assists nearly 3,000 TIP victims annually by rescuing women and children, documenting domestic and international cases of TIP, and collaborating with IJM on prosecutions. At major ports, VFF has helped organize anti-trafficking task forces that include port officials, the police, the Coast Guard, shipping companies, the Department of Labor and Employment, DSWD and other NGOs. More than half of the women and girls rescued by VFF had been promised jobs as entertainers in Japan, but were first obligated to undergo six months of "training" in Metro Manila nightclubs and brothels. Boys are often rescued on their way to forced agricultural labor and cybersex dens. VFF shelters victims and coordinates with DSWD to return them to their homes when appropriate. VFF benefits from a USG USD 84,052 grant to its shelter program, and a USD 423,429 grant meant to intensify awareness about TIP and help develop a TIP prosecution handbook.

-- The American Center for International Labor Solidarity (ACILS): ACILS, in partnership with the Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP), has undertaken the "No to Trafficking Project." Through this project, TUCP and ACILS, which is also known as the "Solidarity Center": assist victims through a network of telephone hotlines; help train judges and prosecutors; host a Technical Working Group with 15 GRP agencies; work on developing a TIP database; and run a TIP awareness campaign. The project also provides gender-issue training to law enforcement officials to help improve anti-TIP prosecutions. ACILS helped develop a standardized reporting format for TIP which PNP stations use nationwide. In February 2003, ACILS received a two-year USD 325,000 grant from the USG to promote TIP awareness and prosecution, and push implementation of anti-TIP legislation down to the neighborhood level.

-- Development Action for Women Network (DAWN): DAWN was founded in 1996 to assist Filipino women and their Japanese-Filipino children. DAWN's program includes provision of social services and job training. DAWN also works to reintegrate victims and mobilize public opinion.

DAWN helps victims who are abroad to return to the Philippines, and then provides short-term shelter, counseling, legal assistance and medical care. DAWN also operates a medium-term job training project in which victims are trained to sew, weave and operate computers. The Japanese government has donated sewing machines to this program. When its budget permits, DAWN is planning to open a larger shelter for its growing client base.

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Prevention  
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18. (U) Key NGOs involved in prevention include:

-- The National Office of Mass Media (NOMM): Under the leadership of Father James Reuter, Jr., an Amciti who has been working in the Philippines since the 1930s, NOMM has been warning the public about traffickers through a daily radio drama on TIP carried on 48 stations throughout the country. NOMM has also pioneered the use of television, newspapers and text messaging as ways to reach out to potential victims in rural areas. NOMM and other Catholic Church entities, such as the influential Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, are among the most steadfast supporters of TIP prevention efforts and use the Church's national reach to press their anti-TIP campaign. In October 2004, NOMM received a USG grant for USD 165,000 to fund one year of anti-TIP publicity.

-- End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and the Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes (ECPAT): ECPAT works to raise general TIP awareness in the tourism and the travel industries, and within high-risk communities. ECPAT is a member of the Special Committee for the Protection of Children, a group that meets under the auspices of the Department of Justice. ECPAT works closely with local government units in major provinces and cities, other NGOs, and church-based organizations. In October 2004, ECPAT received a three-year grant from the USG of USD 78,000.

-- Advancement of Workers' Awareness Regarding Employment (AWARE): AWARE works with the private sector, including recruitment companies and other NGOs, to orient prospective Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) -- a group known to be prone to traffickers -- to the realities of working abroad. AWARE conducts for the GRP mandatory two-day pre-departure orientations, which brief prospective workers on legal protection and worker rights issues, the management of contractual disputes, the handling of personal finances, and other issues. GRP agencies concerned with overseas workers' welfare guide AWARE's curriculum. Recruitment companies, other NGOs, and private contributions provide support to AWARE.

-- The Coalition Against Trafficking in Women ) Asia Pacific (CATW-AP): CATW-AP, a regional organization, brings together 27 anti-TIP NGOs in a network to fight trafficking. CATW-AP (Philippines) President Aurora Javate-De Dios seeks to curb trafficking by focusing the attention of political leaders, the media, and other components of civil society, on the problem. CATW-AP was instrumental in the passage of the Anti-Trafficking law and advocates against prostitution, pornography and sex tourism. CATW-AP provides preventive education programs on migration and TIP at the community level, and conducts dialogues with GRP agencies on preventive measures. CATW-AP services include referring TIP cases to member and partner organizations for legal, counseling and support services. In October 2004, CATW-AP received a three-year USG grant of USD 278,000.

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Comment  
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19. (U) Trafficking is a serious problem in the Philippines, a Tier Two Watch List country -- and the vibrant, innovative, and energetic NGO community has demonstrated unique abilities to combat it. One of the keys to progress in fighting TIP in the Philippines is continued work by the NGO community to assist overburdened prosecutors, and augment protection and prevention programs, including through effective public outreach. The USG has played a crucial role in upgrading NGO efforts by providing seed funding for important projects, including through the grant to IJM to accelerate prosecutions and the grant to VFF to assist its halfway houses. Mission will continue to focus on helping to enhance the capacity of NGOs to face challenges in the TIP arena in a long-term, sustainable manner.  
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